

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 OTTAWA 00244 161600Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 PM-05 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15
CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 L-03 ACDA-12 OMB-01 TRSE-00
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P 161548Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5985
INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY ATHENS
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
AMEMBASSY LISBON
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG
AMEMBASSY MADRID
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY OSLO
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY TUNIS
AMEMBASSY VALLETTA
USMISSION USNATO
COMSIXTHFLT
CINCUSNAVEUR
USCINCEUR
CNO WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L OTTAWA 00244

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINR, TS
SUBJECT: SOVIET USE OF MENZEL-BOURGUIBA DOCKYARDS IN
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PAGE 02 OTTAWA 00244 161600Z

TUNISIA

REF: STATE 8286

1. POLITICAL COUNSELOR CALLED JANUARY 13 ON T. ARCAND,
DIRECTOR OF FRANCOPHONE AND MAGHREB DIVISION, DEPARTMENT
OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (EXTAFF), TO BRIEF HIM ON SOVIET

NAVAL USE OF MENZEL-BOURGUIBA AND TO ENLIST GOC SUPPORT IN MAKING TUNISIANS AWARE OF WESTERN CONCERN. IN RESPONSE, ARCAND INDICATED EXTAFF WAS ONLY GENERALLY FAMILIAR WITH THIS MATTER, THAT HE WOULD CONSULT WITH COLLEAGUES IN OTTAWA, AS WELL AS WITH CANADIAN AMBASSADOR IN TUNIS, AND THAT HE WOULD GET BACK TO US NEXT WEEK.

2. SPEAKING PERSONALLY, ARCAND WONDERED WHY DEPARTMENT HAD CONCLUDED GOC HAS PARTICULARLY CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH TUNISIAN GOVERNMENT AND, THEREFORE, WAS BEING APPROACHED BY US ON THIS QUESTION. WHY, FOR EXAMPLE, WERE NOT THE ITALIANS PLAYING AN ACTIVE ROLE? ARCAND WENT ON TO NOTE THAT GOC-GOT RELATIONS ARE GENERALLY GOOD, BUT CANADA HAS ONLY A MODEST AID PROGRAM IN TUNISIA, AND THERE HAVE BEEN NO HIGH-LEVEL CANADIAN-TUNISIAN VISITS IN PAST YEAR OR TWO.

3. ARCAND INDICATED THAT, AS A NATO MEMBER, CANADA IS OBVIOUSLY CONCERNED ABOUT ANY IMPROVED OPERATIONAL CAPABILITY OF THE SOVIET MEDITERRANEAN SQUADRON, BUT HE WONDERED WHAT SPECIFIC ARGUMENTS CANADIANS COULD MAKE WHICH WOULD BE PERSUASIVE WITH TUNISIANS. FOR CANADIANS TO SAY SOVIET USE OF MENZEL-BOURGUIBA WILL IMPAIR TUNISIA'S IMAGE IN THE WEST, HE DOUBTED WOULD CARRY MUCH WEIGHT. ARCAND ALSO WONDERED WHAT TUNISIA

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 OTTAWA 00244 161600Z

IS OBTAINING ECONOMICALLY FROM THE AGREEMENT WITH THE SOVIETS AND WHETHER THERE WERE OTHER FACTORS, BESIDES ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS, WHICH HAVE MOTIVATED THE GOT-- FOR EXAMPLE, TUNISIAN RELATIONS WITH LIBYA AND ALGERIA.

4. WE WOULD APPRECIATE ANY ADDITIONAL DATA WHICH THE DEPARTMENT COULD PROVIDE TO RESPOND TO ARCAND'S QUERIES AND TO STRENGTHEN ARGUMENTS GOC MIGHT MAKE IN TUNIS. ENDERS

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